

# The management of the archaeological heritage in the Netherlands

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The paper describes the system of archaeological heritage management in the Netherlands, presenting its history and the recent changes. The role of archaeological predictive maps in the process of protection by means of spatial planning of development is particularly stressed.

KEY-WORDS: archaeological heritage management, law, rescue excavations, archaeological predictive maps, the Netherlands

## INTRODUCTION

Archaeological heritage management in the Netherlands has changed considerably in the past decade. In this paper, some of these changes will be reviewed in an analysis of its history and current development.<sup>1</sup> In the Dutch administrative system, all government levels are nowadays involved in heritage management: the state, the provinces, and the municipalities. However, as will be discussed below, the relationship between these levels and the division of responsibilities has changed a great deal in recent years.

The central government organisation is the State Service for Archaeological Investigations ROB (*Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek*), which is part of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Its work is nowadays complemented by archaeologists working for the provincial governments and by about thirty municipal archaeological services. These are the organisations responsible for the heritage management. In the Netherlands, museums have no part in this because presentation and heritage management are considered to be quite separate tasks. Nevertheless, the National Museum of Antiquities (*Rijksmuseum van Oudheden*) and a number of provincial and local museums provide a vital link to the general public in presenting the results of archaeological research. An important part of this research is done by 5 university institutes, working together in a "research school" at the national level.

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<sup>1</sup> A substantial part of this paper is based on Willems 1997.

Before discussing the present situation in more detail, it is useful to consider the development of Dutch heritage management, which took place in three main phases.

In the 19th century up to the beginning of the second World War archaeology was developed as a discipline, which involved documentation and inventarisation of archaeological remains. From the second half of the 19th century onwards, public concern about the destruction of cultural resources and the need that was felt to document the material evidence being destroyed, gradually led to protective measures and to some involvement at the national level. A second phase started with the creation of a basic legal framework in 1940, followed by a – rather slow – process of development of a system for the care and protection of archaeological monuments involving legal and other instruments. The adoption of a revised Monuments Act by the Dutch parliament in 1988, may be a suitable date for the end of this phase. In any case, as is usual for this type of legislation, the act reflected more the established practice of the past than current developments.<sup>2</sup> Although the law brought many practical meliorations, it was in fact outdated when it was adopted. During the 1980s major changes took place, which transformed thinking about the protection of archaeological monuments into a much more dynamic concept of archaeological heritage management. It is too early yet to be able to decide with hindsight when this phase started, but it is clearly embedded in a development that took place in an international context and that has transformed thinking about the archaeological heritage on a global scale (Cleere 1984, 1989; Schiffer and Gumerman 1977).

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although the earliest efforts to preserve archaeological resources in the Netherlands date to the 18th century, these should not be considered as the start of a conscious management policy by national authorities. The process to create a coherent legal framework began only in the late 19th century.

The basis was created in 1818, with the foundation of the National Museum of Antiquities and the appointment of its first director Reuvens to the newly created chair in archaeology at the University of Leiden. This was in fact the very first chair in the world to include national, non-classical archaeology as a subject (Brongers 1976). The Dutch situation can be placed in the framework of contemporary developments elsewhere in Europe in the same period, with the emergence of prehistory as a scientific discipline (Daniel and Renfrew 1988; Schnapp 1993) and a growing interest in national antiquities and their preservation.

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<sup>2</sup> A new revision is currently considered (see below); it has become necessary because in 1998 the Dutch parliament has decided to ratify the Convention of Valetta, but changes for other reasons are necessary as well. An English translation of the current Monuments Act was published as an appendix to Willems 1997.

One of Reuvens' achievements was the start of a documentation system of archaeological sites. His archaeological map of the Netherlands (1845), was followed in later decades by other archaeological atlases (Van Es, Sarfatij and Woltering 1988: 210–11). These were published by the State Museum of Antiquities, which was responsible for the documentation of archaeological finds and sites and remained the primary centre of Dutch archaeology for more than a century.

In the course of the 19th century most of the megalithic tombs, the traditional showpieces of Dutch archaeology, were bought by the state or provincial governments in order to safeguard them from further destruction. In addition, various regional organisations originated which were not only actively involved with research but also with aspects of documentation and conservation of archaeological sites. It took, however, until the late 19th century before any systematic heritage policy was organised at the national level. The government had established a small Culture and Science Department within the Ministry of the Interior by the end of the 19th century, later transferred to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and it had announced a Monuments Act in 1928. Although nothing came of that before the second World War, presumably because of the recession and the pre-war developments, specific regulations for archaeology had evidently been prepared and were rapidly put into force by decree in May 1940, just days after the German invasion of the Netherlands.

The decrees of 1940, which established a State Commission for Archaeology and which eventually led to the foundation of the ROB in 1947 (Willems 1992), mark the beginning of the second phase in the development of heritage management. The regulations brought some order in the organisation of Dutch archaeology in that they provided the instruments for a national policy, which had been lacking in the previous phase when the number of museums, regional societies and, finally, professional institutes, had steadily increased. Although the effect was limited, excavation activities and the deposition of finds were now regulated for the first time.

In 1947, the ROB was founded as the central state institute to carry out excavations and to document the archaeological heritage of the Netherlands. This documentation should be the basis for a list of monuments and for provisions for their protection and maintenance, although a Monuments Act came into effect only in 1961.

As elsewhere in Western Europe after the war,<sup>3</sup> heritage management initially took the form of rescue archaeology in areas where large-scale destruction had occurred. It continued during the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s, which also allowed substantial increases in financial and other means. Although the development of towns and of new infrastructure in the countryside led to an

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<sup>3</sup> For a short overview, see Cleere 1989: 1–5.

unprecedented loss of archaeological information, major public works did include conscious efforts to preserve it.

From the very start, the State Service was heavily involved with excavations in the many churches that had been destroyed during the war and were being rebuilt. But there were other projects as well, for example the involvement with large-scale soil-surveys that started already during the war and which were intended as a basis for land-reallotment schemes, land-use planning, and other purposes. The institute was also involved with vast land reclamation projects in the IJsselmeer, the new polders, where settlements, submerged seadikes and especially many shipwrecks were soon discovered. Eventually, this enterprise developed into the creation of a specialised nautical archaeology department with the local authority, the State Service for the IJsselmeerpolders, which existed until it was incorporated into the ROB in 1992.

The favourable economic situation also allowed the increase of archaeological institutes at Dutch universities: between 1951 and 1971, four new institutes were established. It is remarkable that the split between "academic archaeology" and "heritage management" that characterises the archaeological communities in many other European countries, never arose. On the one hand, the State Service embodied the fundamental unity of research and heritage management and, on the other, university institutes have always taken a substantial part in the necessary rescue excavations by incorporating them in their research. Excavations for purely academic reasons were never excluded, nor were they ever lacking, but heritage management has greatly benefited from the fact that research in the form of what in Germany is sometimes described by the wonderful term *Lustgrabung*, has been very limited in the Netherlands after the war.

Apart from the actions taken at the national level, from 1960 onwards archaeological heritage management was also gradually embedded at the municipal and provincial levels. In 1960, Rotterdam was the first Dutch city with a town-archaeologist, six more were created in the decade between 1970 and 1980, and since then 25 other Dutch towns have established some sort of municipal archaeological service.<sup>4</sup> In 1982, the ROB published a report inspired by the famous British study *The erosion of history*, on the rapidly deteriorating condition of archaeological remains in historic Dutch towns (Van Es, Poldermans, Sarfatij and Sparreboom 1982). It was used to convince local authorities of the importance to include archaeological investigations in the process of urban development. At the provincial level, a system of provincial archaeologists was introduced between 1966 and 1971, in which Dutch provinces collaborated with the ROB to establish one archaeologist for every province, with a specific task in heritage management.

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<sup>4</sup> Some of these are still very small and lack an excavation-permit. For an overview of towns and archaeology in the Netherlands, see Sarfatij 1990.

The system, whereby the archaeologists were employed by the State Service but worked on behalf of the provinces, was quite successful because it generated co-operation between central and regional authorities. Finally, in 1985 a structural basis for the management of the underwater heritage was created at the national level by establishing a small central unit for underwater archaeology.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF "MONUMENTS PROTECTION"

Although official involvement with the archaeological heritage thus developed rapidly in the post-war decades, social and economic developments created an enormous demand that soaked up almost all available finances and manpower. The organisational infrastructure grew rapidly, but it was stretched to its limits in coping with the ever increasing demands on available space for new housing projects, industrial and agricultural activities, roads, *etc.* One of the responses to these circumstances, was the development of large-scale settlement research.

On the one hand, this change was part of the general shift of interest from burial archaeology to settlement archaeology after the war. On the other, it was a direct response to the increased threat to settlement-sites and the fact that their location could be traced by means of archaeological surveys. Large-scale settlement excavations have become one of the characteristics of Dutch archaeology. All of these excavations were rescue archaeology, but under the influence of leading figures such as Modderman and Waterbolk, they went hand in hand with other ingredients that were developed rapidly, such as palaeo-ecological investigations and research into the natural landscape and the relations between sites and landscapes.

It is not surprising that, in view of the enormous challenges that confronted archaeologists, most attention and input of available resources went into rescue archaeology. The Monuments Act of 1961 finally brought the option to protect archaeological monuments by providing a legal basis, but in those days there was in fact very little insight in what "protection" in practice would or should entail. This understanding developed gradually over the next decades and in an early overview of the subject Klok (1972) presented an analysis of the various threats to archaeological monuments, the complicated and tedious administrative processes involved with legal protection and the legal but also other means by which monuments could be preserved. The paper shows how initial efforts led to co-operation with provincial planning departments and other government agencies involved with land-use planning, such as the State Forest Service. It carefully alludes to the possibility that monuments-protection might be served with more openness to the general public and it goes into such topics as the need for inspection of scheduled monuments and options for their consolidation or restauration.

Nevertheless, in 1972 archaeological monuments were still treated much as a collection of precious coins, they were carefully selected elements and given special status and consideration, but they were at the same time treated as specific entities, with relatively little consideration of context. The "protection of archaeological monuments" in the early 1970s was a separate issue that was certainly not firmly embedded in the archaeological community, let alone in society at large. As a result, financial and other resources remained quite limited, which is sometimes attributed to the tendency for rescue excavations to swallow up most resources.<sup>5</sup> In reality, resources in general became scarcer due to the rapidly deteriorating economic climate of the 1970s and to a reluctance at the Ministry to provide even remotely adequate funds for the conservation of archaeological monuments.<sup>6</sup> This does not, however, imply that further developments ceased.

In the early 1970s, the method of systematic archaeological survey was employed for the first time in the Netherlands, rather belatedly when compared to neighbouring countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom but, predictably, with great success. A number of regions were surveyed in great detail in the following two decades, although this never led to a continuing, systematic field survey of the entire country.

In relation to this, the firmly established Dutch research tradition of studying archaeological sites from an ecological perspective and in relation with the surrounding landscape, began to exert its influence in the conservation sector. One result was the start of a series of Archaeological Maps of the Netherlands 1 : 100,000, with an "archaeologically relevant background" consisting of a palaeo-geographical reconstruction (Hallewas 1981). This was followed in 1978 by an effort to start the protection of (parts of) archaeological landscapes, with a variety of sites and natural landscapes in a well preserved condition and no direct threat from land-use reforms or other destructive measures. Although the initiative led to important new impulses it could not be realised because the Monuments Act provided insufficient legal tools to conserve parts of landscapes as archaeological reserves.

Conservation of historic landscapes was not, however, neglected. In this respect, an important decision was taken by the Secretary of State for Culture in 1972. In view of the preparation of the third "national planning policy statement" by the government, the Council for Nature Conservation was asked for an advice on how to arrange for the preservation of natural and cultural values in view of the decisions

<sup>5</sup> Compare Kristiansen 1992 : 57 on the Danish situation. There may be some truth in this, although the notion that all archaeologists would want is to excavate, is a rather primitive misrepresentation that is surely contradicted by the developing "conservation ethics" since the 1960s (Groenewoudt and Bloemers 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Klok 1972, 107. This is one aspect that has not changed much. At the moment, the national budget still has no provisions specifically intended for the acquisition of archaeological monuments.

to be taken about the future development of the country. This resulted in a major project in which a group of specialists from various disciplines produced a combination of maps with an inventory and assessment of natural and cultural values in the Dutch landscape. These are not a systematic and complete overview, nor do they provide a fully integrated approach. Nevertheless, it is one of the first attempts to successfully combine input from different disciplines (historical and physical geography, geology, archaeology, architecture) in a product specifically intended to influence major policy decisions in the field of land-use planning.

As a result of projects such as this, increasing awareness developed of the need for an integrated conservation policy and of the relation of archaeological monuments to a context provided by historic landscapes and, therefore, of the need to integrate heritage management in planning processes. In the Netherlands, this trend became clearly visible in various papers published in the mid 80s, around the same time as similar publications elsewhere in Europe started to appear. Also, through conferences organised by the Council of Europe in Florence and Nice (Council of Europe 1987, 1989), an international debate arose on these issues where formerly, as was already observed with some surprise by Henry Cleere in the introduction to his 1984 volume on *Approaches to the archaeological heritage*, this had been lacking.

## THE CONCEPT OF HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

It is evident that during the 1970s and especially the early 1980s, developments on the national as well as the international level showed important new trends. On the one hand, archaeological monuments, in the sense of movable as well as immovable parts of the cultural heritage, were no longer seen primarily as objects of study but as cultural resources to be of use and benefit in the present and future (Lipe 1984). On the other, there was a clear trend to replace the concept of "care and protection of monuments" by a new approach, the *management* of these archaeological resources, and it was quickly realised that this cannot be done by viewing them in isolation. It has to be done in context: of the natural and the man-made landscape and therefore at a regional scale (Groenewoudt and Bloemers 1997), of the political developments such as the impetus provided by the green debate (Macinnes and Wickham-Jones eds 1992) and of the ongoing land-use planning process (Bloemers 1997).

The management of archaeological resources can also be described as a cyclical process, based on documentation and registration, followed by the stages of inventarisation, assessing significance, selection, protection/conservation or excavation, and finally interpretation/synthesis and communication, which provide the necessary feedback (Fig. 1). If all is well, this feedback causes the management cycle to spiral upwards due to improvements in knowledge and an increasing public support.



a government task at the various administrative levels. If the decision is to excavate, this work should be conducted according to established standards, but the actual excavation could be done by all sorts of public and private organisations, as long as they have been qualified for it. Finally, archaeological institutes of all kinds have a task in the interpretation and synthesis of data and in communication with the general public, where museums have a specialised function.

It is clear that the approach outlined here implies major changes in the current legal framework. The changing views during the 1980s mentioned above, were not reflected in the revision of the Dutch Monuments Act of 1988. The legislation therefore lacks proper instruments for more dynamic forms of heritage management and leaves very limited room for initiative at the local and especially the provincial level. The law has some important improvements over the previous edition, but it is largely concerned with traditional – and, to be fair, unavoidable – subjects such as rules for legal protection, excavation permits, and the deposition of finds. This is obviously due to the fact that new laws usually confirm ways of thinking that have fully crystallised, and in part it is the result of other existing legislation, for example concerning private ownership. Nevertheless, all this should not hide the fact that, until quite recently, the archaeological community at large has also not been very receptive to the new ideas.

Although 1988 seems to be an adequate symbolic point in time to end the formative period of Dutch archaeological heritage management, some changes are inevitably slow. Despite the fact that university archaeology and heritage management have remained integrated in the Netherlands and there is a close co-operation in fieldwork and syntheses of the results of rescue excavations, there is only minimal academic interest in the management of the research base. The position of archival sciences in the history departments of Dutch universities does not yet have its parallels in archaeology.

A fortunate exception to the lack of academic involvement has been the creation, in 1989, of a new national archaeological database and information system connected with a GIS, that was developed in close co-operation between the three major university-departments of archaeology and the ROB (Roorda and Wiemer 1992; Zoetbrood *et al.* 1997). This system, called ARCHIS, has been designed to function both as a research tool and as the documentary basis for an efficient management system.

## CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

An important new development is the use of this system in the production of a variety of archaeological maps. Some of these are in the tradition that was started in the 19th century and have developed into a combination of palaeogeographical landscape reconstruction combined with archaeological information. Others are

simple representations of scheduled and protected monuments, to be used for legal and planning processes. The official so-called Archaeological Monuments Maps developed by the ROB in co-operation with the provinces, are the most important product in this category. A third type of map are predictive maps and policy guidance maps (Deeben *et al.*, 1997). Essentially, these maps are predictive spatial models of the distribution and quality of the surviving archaeological record in a specific region or even nationwide. They are intended as tools in the planning process and to facilitate policy decisions at all levels. In turn, these maps can be combined with information on other aspects of cultural landscapes into integrated historic landscape assessment maps.

The production of these kinds of maps still has many methodological problems, but they are an essential element in a proactive heritage policy and for its successful integration in the process of land-use planning and spatial development. In 1997, the ROB finished the first generation of the nationwide "Indicative Map of Archaeological Values" at a scale of 1 : 50000 (Deeben *et al.*, 1997). The starting point in its production is a division of the Netherlands in archaeologically relevant areas (Fig. 2). These so-called archaeo-regions have been defined on the basis of landscape-genetic and environmental features as well as their occupation history. For each region, a GIS is used to establish relations between soil type, groundwater class and archaeological data, followed by a procedure of expert judgement. The result is a map with indications of the archaeological values such as in Fig. 3. It is of great value in the planning process, even though the first version still left much to be desired. Fortunately, the production of a second version is already well under way. Ideally, the national map should become a generalisation of more detailed maps (at a scale of 1 : 10000) to be used at the municipal and provincial levels. For a few areas, such local maps already exist, but in many cases there is not enough basic information such as digital geological and soil maps with the necessary detail.

In 1996, in a joint pilot project involving close co-operation between several public and private institutes, the first "historic landscape assessment map" for a specific region was produced which can be considered the first serious attempt to an integrated approach with constituent elements from archaeology, historic architecture, historical geography, and man-made nature. Although the results of this work are not unambiguous and further methodology and implication studies will be necessary, the work on this map has shown the way ahead. Several Dutch provinces have started a project to develop integrated historic landscape assessment maps which – in the future – are to be used in the management of cultural landscapes. These initiatives will hopefully be followed by all provinces and, eventually, by a national policy in this field.

That a new proactive approach and integration of archaeological heritage management in the ongoing land-use planning process is necessary, was underlined

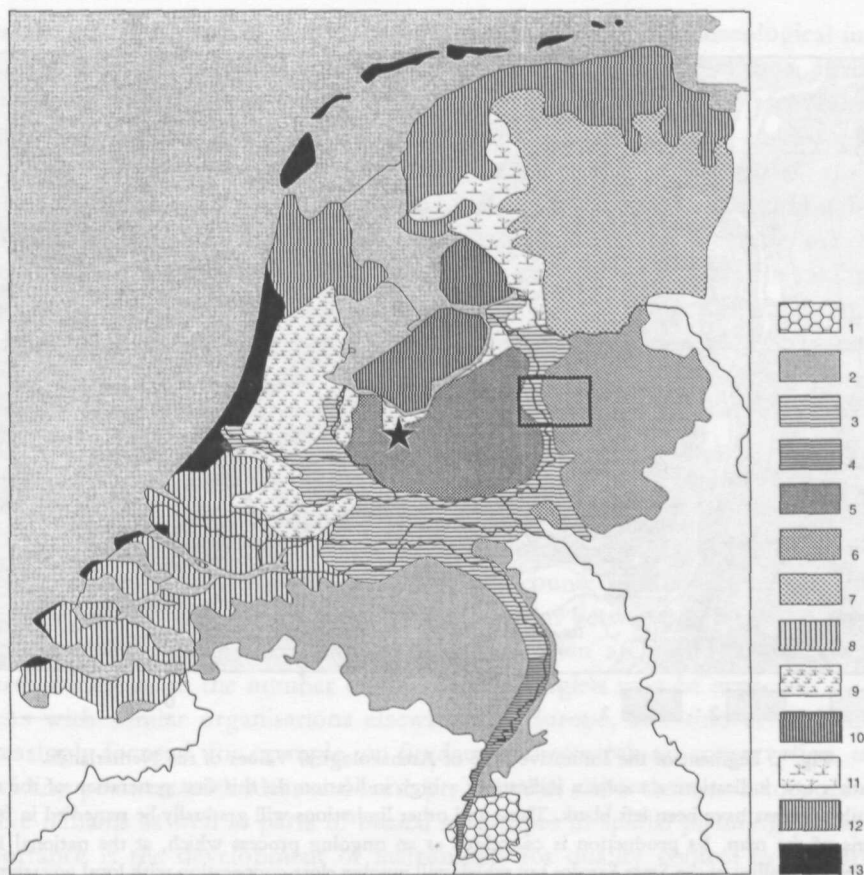


Fig. 2. Archaeoregions in the Netherlands. Legend: 1 Loess-region; 2 Southern Sandy area; 3 Central river area; 4 Meuse valley; 5 Central sandy area; 6 Eastern sandy area; 7 Northern sandy area; 8 Southwestern marine area; 9 Western low-lying peat area; 10 Zuiderzee area; 11 Northern low-lying peat area; 12 Northern marine area; 13 Dune area. After Groenewoudt 1994, fig. 6.

A = Location of figure 3; B = Amersfoort (location of the State Service ROB).

in 1994 with the publication of a study on the degradation of archaeological values in the Dutch soil between 1950 and 1990.<sup>8</sup> The conclusion was, that almost exactly one third of the archaeological values still present in 1950, had disappeared in 1990. This study was one of a series of reports that followed after the restructuring and formal policy change of the ROB which was started in 1992 and in some ways is still an ongoing process.

<sup>8</sup> The report (in Dutch) is discussed in several contributions in Willems, Kars and Hallewas eds 1997.



Fig. 3. Segment of the Indicative Map of Archaeological Values of the Netherlands.

Legend: 1 low indication; 2 medium indication; 3 high indication. In this first generation of the map, the built-up areas have been left blank. These and other limitations will gradually be remedied in future editions of the map. Its production is conceived as an ongoing process which, at the national level, is the responsibility of the State Service but which will involve close cooperation with local governments in order to develop more detailed maps for specific areas.

Part of this development is connected to the implementation of the Convention of Valetta in the Netherlands. The convention, which resulted from the activities of the Council of Europe in 1980s, was signed by the Dutch government at Malta in January, 1992 and ratified by parliament in 1998. Although it still needs to be implemented in new legislation,<sup>9</sup> its content and purpose have already been an important impetus for change in the existing order of Dutch archaeology because it is evident that the existing system is not capable of coping with the demands put by the convention. The Monuments Act will need to be changed to implement articles 5 and 6 of the convention, which are concerned with the integrated conservation of the archaeological heritage and the financing of archaeological

<sup>9</sup> This is the reason why the Netherlands, although the ratification law has been passed, have not formally ratified with the Council of Europe at the moment (Fall 2000).

research and conservation. But it has been realised that the "archaeological infrastructure" will also need to be changed in order to make new legal tools effective.

For example, the now thirty year old system of provincial archaeologists outlined above, has been abolished. Integration of the national and provincial levels is as vital as ever, but Dutch provinces need to develop their own, regional policies in complementary co-operation with that of the state. Although the Netherlands are not a big country, the centralised system whereby the ROB processed all information on planning projects and was responsible for taking the actions necessary, has resulted in increasing numbers of projects being submitted for evaluation. Work has accumulated to such an extent that the system can no longer function properly at the national level. Most of this work can be done more efficiently at the provincial and local levels, with the State Service functioning as a national research and administrative centre.

It is relevant to note that this model could be introduced rapidly over the past two years for two reasons. One is the economic tide which has been favourable so far. The other is the political tide: the fact that the changes were not based on forced decentralisation, which would have been counterproductive, but on fruitful and largely voluntary, complementary co-operation between all levels of government. Virtually all provinces already have their own archaeological service and a further increase in the number of town archaeologists may be expected.

As with similar organisations elsewhere in Europe, attention at the ROB is increasingly focused, for example, on fundamental research on conservation, or on providing planners with ideas and concepts that will allow them to incorporate the visible remains as well as parts of buried landscapes in spatial planning. Of special importance is the development of instruments for quality control in all sorts of archaeological work in order to facilitate the much more professionalised and business-like archaeological process envisaged for the future. Although commercial archaeology has not yet developed very far in the Netherlands and – as in other countries – private companies used to be regarded with suspicion,<sup>10</sup> there will be more room for private initiative in the future. In 1998, an independent firm was established to take over most of the excavations previously conducted by the ROB and it has been decided that market principles should be allowed to operate under controlled circumstances. This will lead to a liberalisation of the archaeological sector, but this will be accompanied by the introduction of a system of quality control with a legal basis. For the Netherlands, with a Monuments Act that explicitly rules out the possibility to excavate for any organisation except the ROB, universities and municipal archaeological services (!), these are important

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<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., the discussions in *Verband der Landesarchäologen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (ed.) 1994.

steps.<sup>11</sup> At the moment, the firm has complete economic independence, but it works under the scientific responsibility of the state service to comply with the legal demands. It is not intended, however, to have a monopoly and when the new legislation is adopted, it will undoubtedly have provisions that allow other commercial firms to work in archaeology.

As mentioned above, the intention is not to start this without at the same time introducing a new legal system for the control of quality in archaeological work. This involves, among others, establishing recognised standards for archaeological work, including norms and specifications. The development of such standards has currently (Fall 2000) nearly been completed by a national committee in which all parties in the Dutch archaeological system are represented. Although complicated, this is one area where international comparison and consultation is badly needed. Only as far as methods for valuation are concerned, does there seem to be an international debate. An especially thorny problem is selection. Obviously, administrative decisions concerning the archaeological heritage will always be influenced by political, financial and other constraints. New legislation will, however, put increased demands to society at large on behalf of the archaeological heritage and this requires a new approach to the problem of selection with respect to archaeological content. As elsewhere in Europe,<sup>12</sup> it is essential to replace "black box" decisions and it is necessary to find an approach that will meet two demands.

On the one hand, a framework for selection must be provided within which recommendations for protection or excavation can be made in such a way that these recommendations make sense with respect to archaeological content. This requires extensive consultation and implies the need to identify research achievements which will provide reference points for decisions involving selection. This work has only just begun and needs to be developed further, with syntheses that are the basis for further research as well as guidelines for management recommendations. A second important demand is that the framework and procedures must make sense from a legal, administrative and economic point of view. This means that they need to be transparent, coherent and understandable, and that criteria should preferably be unambiguous. Finding an adequate answer to these demands will be one of the major challenges in the near future, that will involve specific research and require considerable effort from the archaeological community.

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<sup>11</sup> An overview (in English) of policy changes and political views is available in a recently published speech by the Dutch Secretary of State for Culture, which was delivered at the inaugural meeting of the *Europae Archaeologiae Consilium* (EAC) at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg (Van der Ploeg 2000). It is also available via the Internet (<http://www.minocw.nl/english/archaeology>).

<sup>12</sup> Recent and quite clear statements about this in Olivier 1996 for England and Horn 1995 for Germany.

It is difficult to predict what role the universities and the ROB as a research centre, will play in more traditional forms of archaeological research. At the moment, the ROB has chosen to severely cut its input in this field, which is all the more problematical as Dutch university institutes in the 1990s have suffered severe cutbacks in funding and staffing. In view of the fact that a successful heritage management policy and the legal changes that are now being prepared will inevitably also lead to a substantial increase in unavoidable excavations, this poses a serious threat to Dutch archaeology. After all, with masses of new data being generated, the need will grow to convert this information into relevant knowledge about the past by critical analyses and syntheses. At the same time, this knowledge is vital feedback into the heritage management cycle (Fig. 1), in order to make relevant choices for the future. At the moment, a solution to this problem is being sought in the creation of a national fund which will cover the costs of synthetic studies.

Although the next decade will surely see a further decentralisation and – hopefully – a broader political and public support, some scepticism about current policies remains. A critical debate has arisen, which ranges from concerns about the future of academic archaeology and the freedom of research to fundamental criticism on the strategy of creating archaeological reserves (Kolen 1995). New concepts such as “sustainable development” and “cultural biography of landscapes” are introduced (Bloemers 1997; Groenewoudt and Bloemers 1997; Kolen 1995), while at the same time there are doubts about the effectiveness of conservation strategies in a densely populated country such as the Netherlands. This is, indeed, a complicated task, especially in the highly urbanised western part of the country and some problems may only be solvable in the context of an integrated planning process at a European scale. Nevertheless, developments over the past decades, both nationally and internationally, have led to different and hopefully better perspectives on how to manage the archaeological heritage.

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